

## Notes on the plumages of *Diglossa duidae* with the description of a new subspecies

by Robert W. Dickerman

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The Scaled Flower-piercer *Diglossa duidae* was described by F. M. Chapman (1929) as a new species known only from Cerro Duida, Territorio Amazonas, in the tepui region of southern Venezuela. Subsequently the species was found on most of the high isolated tepuis of the western (Territorio Amazonia) portion of the Pantepui region (Mayr & Phelps 1967). Two subspecies have been described; *hitchcocki*, type locality Cerro Yavi (Phelps & Phelps 1947) and *parui*, type locality Cerro Paru (Phelps & Phelps 1950). The latter was placed in the synonymy of nominate *duidae* by its authors (Phelps & Phelps 1963). During February and March 1984, additional specimens of the species were secured on Cerro de la Neblina in extreme southern Venezuela. Comparisons were made of those specimens with material in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), and in the Coleccion Phelps of Caracas.

*Plumages.* Chapman (1929) mentioned that about one third of the 49 specimens of *D. duidae* he examined had white tipping on the greater and median wing coverts, but did not relate the character to age. Phelps & Phelps (1947, 1950) demonstrated that immature birds had white wing bars and mentioned 64 specimens that they examined in the AMNH collection. In fact the original series collected by the Ollala brothers, contained over 350 specimens of *D. duidae*. Of these, 79 were apparently catalogued immediately, and include the 49 cited as "specimens examined" in the description; the remaining specimens were not catalogued until the 1970's, although they apparently were stored in the main collection. In the entire series there are over 50 specimens in the as yet undescribed juvenal plumage, and there are specimens in all stages of the first prebasic moult.

Juveniles are dull Blackish Neutral Gray (capitalized colour names are from Smith 1975 and 1981), lacking a bluish cast, and are near black on the crown. Ventrally they lack the scaled appearance of the basic plumage described by Chapman. They are a uniform Medium Neutral Gray on the flanks and undertail coverts and Pale Neutral Gray on the belly, darkening to Dark Neutral Gray on the throat and upper breast. The grey colours of the venter have a slight brownish cast that is probably due to foxing since the specimens were collected in 1929. No juveniles were prepared as study skins in 1984.

The sharply pointed juvenal rectrices and the remiges and their coverts are retained into the first basic plumage. However, the coverts may be gradually replaced during the first year as specimens in worn plumage with identifiable juvenal rectrices may have a few or most of the white-tipped coverts replaced with less-worn slate-blue feathers.

Foxing in the definitive plumage of material collected 30 years ago is slight when compared with specimens collected in 1984; however there is a dulling of the bluish cast dorsally, and a browning of the crisp blue-greys of the ventral scalloping, changes which are sufficient to prevent comparisons between recently taken and older specimens. When comparisons were made among specimens of older series (i.e. specimens which had undergone comparable

degrees of change), the enlarged series of specimens from Cerro Neblina proved to be of an unnamed form, which now may be known as:

*Diglossa duidae georgebarrowcloughi* subsp. nov.

*Holotype*. Adult male AMNH 815628, La Cumbre, Cerro Jime (= Cerro de la Neblina), Territorio Amazonas, Venezuela, collected 22 January 1954 by Kathleen Deery de Phelps.

*Diagnosis*. Definitive plumage similar to *D. d. duidae* but duller black (less bluish) dorsally, somewhat greyer (less bluish) ventrally; paler on flanks and breast than *hitchcocki*, with throat and neck less extensively black.

*Range*. Known only from Cerro de la Neblina.

*Etymology*. Named for George F. Barrowclough in recognition of his contributions to the study of the birds of Cerro de la Neblina and his joy in field research.

*Specimens examined*. For preliminary examination, I had available in New York over 80 specimens from Cerro de la Neblina from the Coleccion Phelps for comparisons with the large type series of *duidae*. 48 reliably sexed specimens from Cerro de la Neblina were measured, and 10 in good plumage (including the type) were selected for final colour comparisons. The nine paratypes are AMNH 815627, 815629 and 815630 and Coleccion Phelps 60216, 60219, 60221, 60227 and 60229. The type and 14 specimens of *duidae* in unworn basic plumage (including the type of *parui*), and the type and 11 specimens of *hitchcocki*, all 30-57 years of museum age, were used in making final colour comparisons. Recently taken specimens are not available from Cerros Yavi and Duida for comparison with the 1984 specimens from Cerro de la Neblina.

*Discussion*. The bills of male *georgebarrowcloughi* and *hitchcocki* average longer (visible in series) than in *duidae*. The respective measurements, range (mean), and standard deviation, for 30, 31 and 8 specimens were 9.1-10.3 (9.75), SD 0.39; 8.2-10.0 (9.26), SD 0.40 and 9.2-10.6 (9.83), SD 0.47. It is interesting to note that the peripheral subspecies *hitchcocki* and *georgebarrowcloughi* both retain the dull black dorsal coloration of the juvenal plumage.

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## AVIAN FAMILY-GROUP NAMES

The Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature of the International Ornithological Committee has prepared a list of established names of avian family-group taxa (subtribes to superfamilies) and their synonyms as the first step in process of writing an application to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to stabilize use of these names. The SCON wishes to obtain the views on this list of all interested ornithologists and zoologists, and will make the list available to all those who are willing to examine it carefully and to provide the SCON with corrections, additions, comments and suggestions. This list of avian family-group names is unofficial and should not be used for any purpose other than that indicated above. Copies of the list may be obtained by writing to Professor Walter J. Bock, Chairman SCON, Department of Biological Sciences, Columbia University, New York, NY 10026, USA.

## Books Received

Génsbøl, B. 1986. *Guide to the Birds of Prey of Britain and Europe, North Africa and the Middle East*. Translated by Dr Gwynne Vevers. Pp. 384. Illustrated by B. Bertel, plus 183 colour and black-and-white photographs, 42 distribution maps and charts. Collins. £14.95 hardback. 12.5 x 20 cm.

A thick pocket-sized guide covering comprehensively the 46 species of birds of prey recorded as breeding in the area covered. Introductory sections include raptor adaptations, food, migration, conservation and persecution. The main text gives details of these aspects for each species and an analysis of population trends and habitat changes. There follow 90 pages on the identification of each species with black-and-white illustrations. The whole adds up to a useful and competent guide, and the photographs are outstanding.

Harbard, C. 1986. *Evenings at the Coot and Corncrake*. A Birdwatchers quizz book. Pp. 128. Illustrated. Collins. Paperback. £2.95. 19.5 x 12 cm.

The author provides some amusing and highly imaginative well told tall stories in a twitchers' (listers') setting in a convivial country pub. There are deliberate howlers as well as interspersions of quizzes and other puzzles, all with answers at the end of the book. Judging by the author's denials, several individuals seem likely to recognise themselves in the caricature characters created.

Smout, Anne-Marie. 1986. *The Birds of Fife*. Illustrated by D. Mitchell. Pp. 274. John Donald. Paperback. £7.50. 21.5 x 14 cm.

A well produced, evidently well researched avifauna of this small county on the northern shore of the Firth of Forth in an easy readable style. An interesting 22 page Introduction, covering the topography and ornithological history of the county, is followed by the Systematic List giving the past and present status in some detail of 282 species (the Isle of May is excluded) with separate maps, where needed, for breeding and winter distribution. There is a useful bibliography and gazetteer. The illustrator takes an attractively chubby view of his birds. Commendable.